



Standard Symbol

BMP Objectives

- Soil Stabilization
- Sediment Control
- Tracking Control
- Wind Erosion Control
- Non-Storm Water Management
- Materials and Waste Management

Definition and Purpose

Soil binders consist of applying and maintaining a soil stabilizer to exposed soil surfaces. Soil binders are materials applied to the soil surface to temporarily prevent water-induced erosion of exposed soils on construction sites. Soil binders also provide temporary dust, wind, and soil stabilization (erosion control) benefits. This is one of five temporary soil stabilization alternatives to consider.

Appropriate Applications

Soil binders are typically applied to disturbed areas requiring short-term temporary protection. Because soil binders can often be incorporated into the work, they may be a good choice for areas where grading activities will soon resume. Application on stockpiles to prevent water and wind erosion.

Limitations

- Soil binders are temporary in nature and may need reapplication.
- Soil binders require a minimum curing time until fully effective, as prescribed by the manufacturer, which may be 24 hours or longer. Soil binders may need reapplication after a storm event.
- Soil binders will generally experience spot failures during heavy rainfall events. If runoff penetrates the soil at the top of a slope treated with a soil binder, it is likely that the runoff will undercut the stabilized soil layer and discharge at a point further down slope.
- Soil binders do not hold up to pedestrian or vehicular traffic across treated areas.
- Soil binders may not penetrate soil surfaces made up primarily of silt and clay, particularly when compacted.
- Storm water quality runoff sampling is required for many soil binders. Soil binders that do not require sampling are identified in the Caltrans SWPPP/WPCP Preparation Manual, Pollutant Table, Attachment S.

- Some soil binders may not perform well with low relative humidity. Under rainy conditions, some agents may become slippery or leach out of the soil.
- May not cure if low temperatures occur within 24 hours of application.

Standards and Specifications

General Considerations

- Site-specific soil types will dictate appropriate soil binders to be used.
- A soil binder must be environmentally benign (non-toxic to plant and animal life), easy to apply, easy to maintain, economical, and shall not stain paved or painted surfaces, refer to Standard Specifications Section 20-2.11.
- Some soil binders are compatible with existing vegetation.
- Performance of soil binders depends on temperature, humidity, and traffic across treated areas.
- Avoid over-spray onto the traveled way, sidewalks, lined drainage channels, and existing vegetation.

Soil Binders Applications

After selecting an appropriate soil binder, the untreated soil surface must be prepared before applying the soil binder. The untreated soil surface must contain sufficient moisture to assist the agent in achieving uniform distribution. In general, the following steps shall be followed:

- Follow manufacturer's recommendations for application rates, pre-wetting of application area, and cleaning of equipment after use.
- Prior to application, roughen embankment and fill areas by rolling with a crimping or punching type roller or by track walking. Track walking shall only be used where rolling is impractical.
- Consider the drying time for the selected soil binder and apply with sufficient time before anticipated rainfall. Soil binders shall not be applied during or immediately before rainfall.
- Avoid over-spray onto the traveled way, sidewalks, lined drainage channels, sound walls, and existing vegetation.
- Soil binders shall not be applied to frozen soil, areas with standing water, under freezing or rainy conditions, or when the air temperature is below 40C (40oF) during the curing period.
- More than one treatment is often necessary, although the second treatment may be diluted or have a lower application rate.
- Generally, soil binders require a minimum curing time of 24 hours before they are fully effective. Refer to manufacturer's instructions for specific cure times.

- For liquid agents:
 - Crown or slope ground to avoid ponding.
 - Uniformly pre-wet ground at 0.14 to 1.4 L/m² (0.03 to 0.3 gal/yd²) or according to manufacturer's recommendations.
 - Apply solution under pressure. Overlap solution 150 to 300 mm (6 to 12 in).
 - Allow treated area to cure for the time recommended by the manufacturer; typically, at least 24 hours.
 - In low humidities, reactivate chemicals by re-wetting with water at 0.5 to 0.9 L/m² (0.1 to 0.2 gal/yd²).

Selecting a Soil Binder

Properties of common soil binders used for erosion control are provided in Table 1 and Appendix B. Use Table 1 to select an appropriate soil binder.

Factors to consider when selecting a soil binder include the following:

- Suitability to situation - Consider where the soil binder will be applied; determine if it needs a high resistance to leaching or abrasion, and whether it needs to be compatible with any existing vegetation. Determine the length of time soil stabilization will be needed, and if the soil binder will be placed in an area where it will degrade rapidly. In general, slope steepness is not a discriminating factor for the listed soil binders.
- Soil types and surface materials - Fines and moisture content are key properties of surface materials. Consider a soil binder's ability to penetrate, likelihood of leaching, and ability to form a surface crust on the surface materials.
- Frequency of application - The frequency of application can be affected by subgrade conditions, surface type, climate, and maintenance schedule. Frequent applications could lead to high costs. Application frequency may be minimized if the soil binder has good penetration, low evaporation, and good longevity. Consider also that frequent application will require frequent equipment clean-up.

After considering the above factors, the soil binders in Table 1 will be generally appropriate as follows:

Plant-Material Based (Short Lived)

-Guar: Guar is a non-toxic, biodegradable, natural galactomannan-based hydrocolloid treated with dispersent agents for easy field mixing. It shall be diluted at the rate of 1.2 to 1.8 kg per 1,000 liters (1 to 5 lb per 100 gallons) of water, depending on application machine capacity. Recommended minimum application rates are as follows:

Application Rates for Guar Soil Stabilizer

Slope (V:H):	Flat	1:4	1:3	1:2	1:1
Kg/Ha:	45	50	56	67	78
lb/ac	40	45	50	60	70

-Psyllium: Psyllium is composed of the finely ground muciloid coating of plantago seeds that is applied as a dry powder or in a wet slurry to the surface of the soil. It dries to form a firm but rewettable membrane that binds soil particles together but permits germination and growth of seed. Psyllium requires 12 to 18 hours drying time. Psyllium shall be applied at a rate of 90 to 225 kg/ha (80 to 200 lb/ac), with enough water in solution to allow for a uniform slurry flow.

-Starch: Starch is non-ionic, cold-water soluble (pre-gelatinized) granular cornstarch. The material is mixed with water and applied at the rate of 170 kg/ha (150 lb/ac). Approximate drying time is 9 to 12 hours.

Plant-Material Based (Long Lived)

-Pitch and Rosin Emulsion: Generally, a non-ionic pitch and rosin emulsion has a minimum solids content of 48%. The rosin shall be a minimum of 26% of the total solids content. The soil stabilizer shall be non-corrosive, water-dilutable emulsion that upon application cures to a water insoluble binding and cementing agent. For soil erosion control applications, the emulsion is diluted and shall be applied as follows:

For clayey soil: 5 parts water to 1 part emulsion

For sandy soil: 10 parts water to 1 part emulsion

Application can be by water truck or hydraulic seeder with the emulsion/product mixture applied at the rate specified by the manufacturer. Approximate drying time is 19 to 24 hours.

Polymeric Emulsion Blends

-Acrylic Copolymers and Polymers: Polymeric soil stabilizers shall consist of a liquid or solid polymer or copolymer with an acrylic base that contains a minimum of 55% solids. The polymeric compound shall be handled and mixed in a manner that will not cause foaming or shall contain an anti-foaming agent. The polymeric emulsion shall not exceed its shelf life or expiration date; manufacturers shall provide the expiration date. Polymeric soil stabilizer shall be readily miscible in water, non-injurious to seed or animal life, non-flammable, shall provide surface soil stabilization for various soil types without totally inhibiting water infiltration, and shall not re-emulsify when cured. The applied compound shall air cure within a maximum of 36 to 48 hours. Liquid copolymer shall be diluted at a rate of 10 parts water to 1 part polymer and applied to soil at a rate of 11,000 liters/hectare (1,175 gal/ac).

-Liquid Polymers of Methacrylates and Acrylates: This material consists of a tackifier/sealer that is a liquid polymer of methacrylates and acrylates. It is an aqueous 100% acrylic emulsion blend of 40% solids by volume that is free from styrene, acetate, vinyl, ethoxylated surfactants or silicates. For soil stabilization applications, it is diluted with water in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations, and applied with a hydraulic seeder at the rate of 190 L/ha (20 gal/ac). Drying time is 12 to 18 hours after application.

-Copolymers of Sodium Acrylates and Acrylamides: These materials are non-toxic, dry powders that are copolymers of sodium acrylate and acrylamide. They are mixed with water and applied to the soil surface for erosion control at rates that are determined by slope gradient:

Slope Gradient (V:H)	kg/ha (lb/ac)
Flat to 1:5	3.4 – 5.6 (3-5)
1:5 to 1:3	5.6 – 11.2 (5-10)
1:2 to 1:1	11.2 – 22.4 (10-20)

-Poly-Acrylamide and Copolymer of Acrylamide: Linear copolymer polyacrylamide is packaged as a dry-flowable solid. When used as a stand-alone stabilizer, it is diluted at a rate of 1.5 kg/1,000 liters (1 lb/100 gal) of water and applied at the rate of 5.6 kg/ha (5 lb/ac).

-Hydro-Colloid Polymers: Hydro-Colloid Polymers are various combinations of dry-flowable poly-acrylamides, copolymers and hydro-colloid polymers that are mixed with water and applied to the soil surface at rates of 60 to 70 kg/ha (53 to 62 lb/ac). Drying times are 0 to 4 hours.

Cementitious-Based Binders

-Gypsum: This is a formulated gypsum-based product that readily mixes with water and mulch to form a thin protective crust on the soil surface. It is composed of high purity gypsum that is ground, calcined and processed into calcium sulfate hemihydrate with a minimum purity of 86%. It is mixed in a hydraulic seeder and applied at rates 4,500 to 13,500 kg/ha (4,000 to 12,000 lb/ac). Drying time is 4 to 8 hours.

- Maintenance and Inspection**
- Reapplying the selected soil binder may be needed for proper maintenance. High traffic areas shall be inspected daily, and lower traffic areas shall be inspected weekly.
 - After any rainfall event, the Contractor is responsible for maintaining all slopes to prevent erosion.
 - Maintain an unbroken, temporary stabilized area while DSAs are nonactive. Repair any damaged stabilized area and re-apply soil binder to exposed areas.

Table 1 Properties of Soil Binders for Erosion Control				
Chemicals	Plant Material Based (Short Lived)	Plant Material Based (Long Lived)	Polymeric Emulsion Blends	Cementitious-Based Binders
Relative Cost	Low	Low	Low	Low
Resistance to Leaching	High	High	Low to Moderate	Moderate
Resistance to Abrasion	Moderate	Low	Moderate to High	Moderate to High
Longevity	Short to Medium	Medium	Medium to Long	Medium
Minimum Curing Time before Rain	9 to 18 hours	19 to 24 hours	0 to 24 hours	4 to 8 hours
Compatibility with Existing Vegetation	Good	Poor	Poor	Poor
Mode of Degradation	Biodegradable	Biodegradable	Photodegradable/ Chemically Degradable	Photodegradable/ Chemically Degradable
Labor Intensive	No	No	No	No
Specialized Application Equipment	Water Truck or Hydraulic Mulcher	Water Truck or Hydraulic Mulcher	Water Truck or Hydraulic Mulcher	Water Truck or Hydraulic Mulcher
Liquid/Powder	Powder	Liquid	Liquid/Powder	Powder
Surface Crusting	Yes, but dissolves on rewetting	Yes	Yes, but dissolves on rewetting	Yes
Clean-Up	Water	Water	Water	Water
Erosion Control Application Rate	Varies ⁽¹⁾	Varies ⁽¹⁾	Varies ⁽¹⁾	4,500 to 13,500 kg/ha

(1) Dependant on product, soil type, and slope inclination